



# Plant Fact Sheet

## Narrowleaf Penstemon

*Penstemon angustifolius* Nutt. ex. Pursh

Plant symbol = PEAN4

**Contributed by:**

*USDA-NRCS New Mexico Plant Materials Center  
and*

*New Mexico State University Los Lunas Agricultural Science Center*

**Alternate Names**

Broadbeard Penstemon  
Taperleaf Penstemon  
Broadbeard Beardtongue

**Uses**

*Erosion control:* Narrow leaf penstemon is a drought tolerant forb. It is helpful in preventing wind erosion on sandy dunes, plains and grasslands where it establishes.

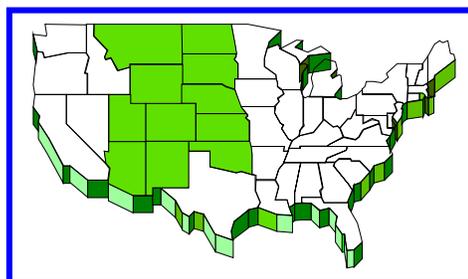
*Wildlife:* Narrow leaf penstemon provides a food source to small birds and mammals. It is heavily used by hummingbirds and various insects during flowering.

*Urban:* Narrow leaf penstemon is a drought tolerant forb that also produces beautiful flowers in early spring. This makes it an ideal plant for xeriscaping.



**Description**

*Penstemon angustifolius* Nutt. ex. Pursh., narrow leaf penstemon, is native to various western and plains states. It is a stout, smooth, waxy, gray green perennial herb. The plant grows from 8 to 24 inches with several stout, erect or somewhat curving stems. The flowers range from 1/2 to 3/4 inch and are various shades of violet and pink. Insect guidelines may or may not be present.



**Adaptation**

Narrow leaf penstemon is found throughout the western and great plains states. It is adapted to sandy mesas and grasslands and is frequently

found on dunes. It does poorly and is short lived when planted in heavy soils.

### **Establishment**

The seed of narrow leaf penstemon requires cold stratification for germination. Approximately 85% of the seed are dormant. Total germination averages above 90%. Field plantings of this seed should be done in the fall. Seeding should be at approximately 12 seed per foot. With adequate winter moisture or supplemental irrigation, stands are generally good.

### **Management**

After stand establishment, it is important to limit irrigation. In normal years with 8-10 inches of precipitation, no irrigation is necessary. Narrow leaf penstemon is extremely sensitive to root rot fungi and if overwatered the entire stand will be destroyed.

Although not necessary, narrow leaf penstemon responds well to fertilization. After establishment, it does not appear to be damaged by the use of pre-emergent herbicides. After harvest the plants soon become dormant and may then be mowed.

### **Availability**

Seed may be obtained through New Mexico Crop Improvement.

### **References**

1. Heflin, Jean. 1997. Penstemons The Beautiful Beardtongues of New Mexico. Jackrabbit Press. Albuquerque, New Mexico.
2. Martin, W.C. and C.R. Hutchins. 1980. A Flora of New Mexico. J. Kramer. Vaduz, West Germany.
3. Kearny, T.H. and R.H. Peebles. 1942. Flowering Plants and Ferns of Arizona. U.S. Government Printing Office. Washington, D.C.

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